

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 73

By Southerland

A RESOLUTION to honor Lew Kunkel upon his exemplary career as a pilot.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those citizens who have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm throughout their careers; and

WHEREAS, Lew Kunkel is one such dedicated professional pilot, who has reduced his time in the cockpit by retiring from his full-time job of piloting personal and chartered flights on a Gulfstream IV Special Performance jet, the star of the fleet owned by Greeneville businessman and philanthropist Scott M. Niswonger; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Mr. Kunkel has relied on his background as a mechanic and certified aircraft inspector to ensure this jet and others are kept in excellent flying condition; and

WHEREAS, after fifty years as a licensed pilot with more than 22,000 hours at the helm, Mr. Kunkel plans to relax a little and travel with his wife to visit children and grandchildren in Indiana and Florida, although he will still fly part time; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kunkel has literally flown across the globe, and in addition to Mr. Niswonger and his family, business people, and Niswonger Foundation scholars, staff, and alumni, he has transported numerous celebrities over the years, including Dolly Parton, General Colin Powell, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Vice President Dan Quayle, Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, Tyra Banks, Rod Stewart, and The Beach Boys; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kunkel and Mr. Niswonger are both pilots and are from similar backgrounds, and they have shared a special, mutually beneficial relationship during their twenty-three years together as employee and employer and fellow world travelers; and

WHEREAS, after soloing at a mere sixteen years of age, Lew Kunkel earned his pilot's license in 1967 at the age of seventeen and went on to become an airframe and power plant mechanic for Magnavox in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, running the maintenance operation and flying part time for seven years; and

WHEREAS, he first came to Greeneville as a pilot for Magnavox in 1980, but within six months he was piloting chartered flights out of the local airport for Diamond G; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kunkel flew for the company for thirteen years until the company was sold, as chartered flights outgrew smaller craft and started using larger business-class jets; and

WHEREAS, in January 1994, he began his association with Mr. Niswonger and the rest, as they say, is history; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career in the air, Lew Kunkel has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of his colleagues and clients alike; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and recognize Lew Kunkel upon his fifty-year career as a licensed pilot and extend to him our best wishes for much continued success and happiness in his semi-retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.